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At the very bottom of the inconscience most hard and rigid and narrow and stifling I struck upon an almighty spring that cast me up forthwith into a formless limitless Vast vibrating with the seeds of a new world.

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The ADVENT

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Remain firm and turned in the one direction—towards the Mother.

SRI AUROBINDO

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THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

EDITORIALS*

MOTHER'S COMMENTARY

"Man seeks at first blindly and does not even know that he is seeking his divine self."

Thoughts and Glimpses — SRI AUROBINDO

How can one seek and not know that he is seeking?

There are so many things you think, you feel, you want without knowing. Are you fully conscious of yourself, of all that is happening in you ? Certainly not. If, for example, at an odd moment when you were not at all expecting it, I asked you all on a sudden, "What are you thinking of ?", your answer would be in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, "I do not know". And if

* Based on the Mother's Talks to the Children of the Ashram

in the same way I asked you, "what do you want ?", you would give the same answer, "I do not know". And to the question, "what do you feel ?", you would answer again "I do not know". They alone can give an immediate answer to such a precise question who have been accustomed to look within themselves to observe themselves, who are intent upon knowing what passess within themselves.

In certain cases in one's life one can say, yes. When one is absorbed in what one feels, or thinks or wants, then one can say, "Yes, I want this, I am thinking of this, I am feeling this". But it is only at moments, not all the time that one is capable of that.

Well, to find out what one is, to find out why one is upon earth, what is the reason of the physical existence, of one's presence upon earth, of this formation, of this life—the vast majority of mankind live without asking anything of the kind. Only the few enlightened ones put such questions with an interest and still less are those who sit down to work out the answer. And it is not easy to find it unless you are favoured with the chance of meeting someone who knows.

Now, just imagine you had never in your hands any book of Sri Aurobindo, nor any work of any writer or philosopher or sage who consecrated his life to this quest, and suppose you were in the ordinary world like the millions of people who are there, who have heard nothing of anything, except sometimes, nor always nowadays, very rarely even, of vague divinities and a certain form of religion which is more a habit than a faith, telling you scarcely why you are here upon earth, then you do not think at all of thinking of it. You live day to day the circumstances of each day. When you are young you think of playing and eating, a little later studying, and afterwards you think of all circumstances of life. But to set before you *the* problem and ask "But why, why then am I here ?" is a rare phenomenon.

To some people the idea comes only when they face a catastrophe. When they see a person they loved about to die, when

they are placed in situations particularly difficult and painful, then, if they are sufficiently intelligent, they take a turn inward and ask, "but, what is this tragedy we live through, what is its purpose, what is its goal ?" It is then only that one begins to seek and know.

To discover, however, as Sri Aurobindo says, that there is a divine self within you, and therefore your endeavour must be to know this divine self, that comes much later. And yet, in spite of everything, from the very moment of one's birth in a physical body, there is in the being, at the bottom of the being, this psychic presence that drives the whole being towards this fulfilment. But who knows it, who recognises this psychic being ?

This also comes only, and unfortunately most of the time, under exceptional circumstances. These must be painful circumstances, otherwise you live on thoughtlessly. And still you have at the bottom of your being this psychic self that tries and tries and tries to awaken the consciousness, establish the union back again, and you know nothing of it.

When you were ten years old, did you know it ? No, is it not ? And yet, in the core of your being, your psychic being was already wanting to come out and trying that it might be able to do so. It is probably that that has brought you here. There are so many things that happen for which you do not ask why. You take them for granted, it is that because it is that.

It would be very interesting to know how many among you, until the time I spoke of it to you, had asked how is it that you are here. Naturally, most often the reply would be perhaps very simple, "My parents are here, therefore I am here". Nobody is born here and still you are all here. You never thought of it; it is so, you believe, because it is so. And then between the time when you ask the question and the time when you have an answer sufficiently well formulated to be able to hold to it and can say "Perhaps it is the indication of a destiny, the very reason of my life and existence"—what a long way one has had to traverse !

Each one has his external reasons, but they have not much

value; the explanation given may be quite flat and commonplace. For the deeper reason that is there you do not know as yet. Indeed, are there many here who are really interested in knowing why they are here ? How many among you have asked yourself, "But what is the real reason of my being here ?" Only those who have come here after having lived a life, who have come here because they wanted to come with a conscious reason for coming, can say, "I am here because of this" and that would be partially at least an explanation. The truest, deepest reason may still escape them, that is to say, the particular realisation that each one has to work for. That comes only when you have overpassed a good number of stages.

In reality, it is only when you have become conscious of your soul, when you are identified with your psychic being, that you can see at a glance the whole picture of your individual development through the ages. It is then that you begin to know, not before. It is then, I assure you, that it becomes interesting. That changes the situation in your life.

There is a great difference between feeling vaguely, having a groping impression of something—of a force, a movement, an impulsion, an attraction, something that moves you forward in life, but very imprecise, uncertain, misty—and having a clear vision, an exact perception, a full comprehension of the meaning of life. It is then alone that you begin to see things as they are, not before. It is then alone that you can follow the thread of your destiny and perceive clearly the goal and the means of reaching it.

But that comes about through a succession of inner awakenings, like doors that open all on a sudden on new horizons. It is truly a new birth into a consciousness that is more true, more profound, more lasting. Till then you live in the clouds, gropingly, under the weight of a destiny that sometimes crushes you, gives you the feeling that you have been formed in that way and you can do nothing to change it. You are under the heavy burden of your existence which presses you down, makes you crawl

upon the earth instead of lifting you up above and making you see all the threads, the threads that guide and the threads that reunite different things into a single movement of progress towards a realisation that becomes clear, at the end.

One must rise out of this half-consciousness which is generally considered to be quite natural. That is your normal way of being and you do not withdraw yourself sufficiently to be able to live and wonder at this uncertainty, this lack of precision. On the contrary, to know that one is seeking, seeking consciously, deliberately, obstinately, methodically—that is an exceptional, almost an abnormal condition !

16-1-57

II

> "The first obscure material movement of the evolutionary Force is marked by an aeonic graduality; the movement of life progress proceeds slowly but still with a quicker step, it is concentrated into the figure of millenniums; mind can still further compress the tardy leisureliness of Time and make long paces of the centuries; but when the conscious spirit intervenes, a supremely concentrated pace of evolutionary swiftness becomes possible".
>
> *The Life Divine :* The Ascent towards Supermind

Sri Aurobindo speaks here of Nature's movement, how out of matter that is apparently inert life has come, how out of life mind has come and how out of mind will come the supramental or the spiritual life. And he gives a summary indication of the time that this movement takes.

I compared the Supramental manifestation to the mental manifestation. According to modern scientific discoveries, the

mental manifestation has taken about a million years to evolve from a simian brain to the first human brain. And I told you, therefore, that one must not expect the supramental manifestation to be achieved within a few months or a few years, that will evidently take a little more time.

Now some people seem to have concluded from that that I had announced that there would be no superman in a million years. I want to correct this impression.

Sri Aurobindo says that as growth proceeds on a higher and higher scale of consciousness, the movement becomes quicker and when the Supramental or the Spirit mixes up with it, the thing may go very much quicker. So, we can hope that in a few centuries the first supramental race will appear.

But even that is disconcerting to some, for they believe that it is contradictory to what Sri Aurobindo has always promised, that the time is come when the supramental transformation is possible. But you must not confuse supramental transformation with the appearance of the new race. What Sri Aurobindo has promised and what evidently interests us who are here now is that the time is come when some chosen beings out of the present day humanity who fulfil the conditions of the necessary spiritualisation would be capable of transforming their body with the help of the Supramental Force, the Supramental Consciousness and the Supramental Light and would no longer be animal men but become supermen.

This promise he based on the knowledge he had that the Supramental Force was about to break upon earth. In point of fact, the Supramental Force had come down into him long ago. He knew it and he knew what were its results.

Now that the Supramental has manifested in a general cosmic way, the certitude of the possibility of the transformation is naturally much greater. There is no doubt that those who fulfil and will fulfil the conditions are on the way towards this transformation.

The conditions, Sri Aurobindo gives in detail in the *Syn-*

thesis of Yoga and in still more detail in his last articles on the *Supramental Manifesation*; now one has only to realise.

Each person wishes to follow his own way according to his own nature. He is always more inclined to one way than another. He who follows the path of action will find it more difficult to feel that human personality does not exist, that only the divine Force acts. He who follows the path of knowledge, that is easy relatively, it is a thing which one discovers almost immediately. For one who follows the path of love, it is elementary, for it is by giving yourself away that you advance.

On the path of action the most essential condition at the beginning—for it is most universal, the very first step—is to create in oneself a complete detachment from the fruit of action, to act because it is the thing to be done, to do it in the best way possible, not to worry about results, to leave the results to a Higher Will than yours. One cannot form absolute general rules in this matter. At a certain moment one understands very well and it is then visible that there are no two similar ways, that each one follows his own path and that is the truth of his being. One can, if one sees from a sufficient height, find out a difference in the speed of the progress, but it does not always agree with external signs. One can say in a rather lighter vein that the faster one, is not necessarily the wiser one. I do not think general rules can be formed.

But the Divine Grace is upon all. And what is the thing necessary in order to let it act ? It is somewhat difficult to say. If you can perceive it, feel it, experience, so to say, its action, be conscious of its presence and its movement, then you have the delight of the movement, the progress and the realisation. But this does not mean that if you do not have this delight, it does not act or that the realisation is not there.

After all, all ways of being in the manifestation are necessary to express the Divine. It is this manifestation as a whole in its totality that is moving towards a progressive, infinite, eternal perfection; the whole is a collective and undivided expression of

the divine Truth. All that is advancing constantly, eternally towards a greater and greater perfection. The universe of tomorrow will be necessarily more divine (if one can say so) than the universe of yesterday, as that of yesterday was more divine than the one which preceded it. And so one can say that the Divine is progressing perpetually in its expression towards a more and more perfect, more and more divine manifestation. If this is so, then each unit has only to manifest as perfectly as possible its own law, that is to say, what it should be in the whole so that it may be able to do to the utmost that which it has to do.

It is then the conscious, luminous—one might almost say, disinterested discovery of this truth of the being that becomes for each one the first and the most important necessity.

10-10-56

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

SURREALIST

I HAVE heard a foghorn shouting at a sheep,
And oh the sweet sound made me laugh and weep
But alas,[1] the sheep was on the hither shore
Of the little less and the ever-never more.
I sprang on its back; it jumped into the sea.
I was near to the edges of eternity.
Then suddenly the foghorn blared again.
There was no sheep—it had perished of ear pain.
I took a boat and steered to the Afar
Hoping to colonise the polar star.
But in the boat there was a dangerous goose
Whom some eternal idiot had let loose.
To this wild animal I said not "Bo !"
But it was not because I did not know.
Full soon I was on shore with dreadful squeals
And the fierce biped cackling at my heels.
Alarmed I ran into a lion's den
And after me ran three thousand armoured men.
The lion bolted through his own backdoor
And set up a morose dissatisfied roar.
At this my courage rose; I grew quite brave
And shoved my self into a tiger's cave.
The tiger snarled; I thought it best instead
To don my pyjamas and go to bed.
But the tiger had a strained objecting face,
So I turned my eyes away from his grimace.
At night the beast began my back to claw

[1] ah

And growled out that I was his brother-in-law.
I rose and thought it best to go away
To a doctor's house : besides twas nearly day.
The doctor shook his head and cried "For a back
Pepper and salt are the remedy, alack."
But I objected to his condiments
And thought the doctor had but little sense.
Then I returned to my own little cot
For really things were now extremely hot.
Then *fierily* the world cracked *Nazily* down
And I looked about to find my dressing gown.
I was awake (I had tumbled on the floor).
A shark was hammering away at my front-door.

SRI AUROBINDO

SYMBOLS—VISIONS—EXPERIENCES

(*A blossomed white lotus over the crown of my head. The same again in the heart.*)

The white lotus is the symbol of the Mother's consciousness, —it does not indicate any part of the individual consciousness.

16-5-1936

*
**

(*Sri Aurobindo running fast on the back of a fine horse; later he is with the Mother in an aeroplane. Any significance?*)

Nothing special. Journeying on a horse or in a conveyance, if symbolic, means a progress or a movement in life, work or sadhana.

14-4-1936

*
**

(*Ma, ma in bold Bengali letters written all over my heart.*)

These are symbols of dedication or surrender.

14-4-1936

*
**

(*There is in me an earnest urge to put forth my entire energy in my sadhana, but I feel I cannot. How to proceed?*)

It has to come by an increasing consecration and aspiration.

14-4-1936

*
**

(*In the place of the skull an open lotus; over it a white blue light.*)

It is the lotus which is at the top of the head and above it —the centre where the lower consciousness meets the higher.

27-8-1936

*
**

(*Leaving entirely all activities, I felt I had risen up and there it was quiet and wide.*)

It was to the spiritual plane (that of the Self, Atman) that you rose.

19-8-1936

*
**

(*The flower of eternal smile first over my head and then within the heart.*)

The eternal smile means the self-existent joy and gladness of the Spirit.

19-8-1936

*
**

(*During Pranam my being was searching within the heart. Suddenly I saw a pond in place of the heart and a fish was moving. The water was light-blue and the fish white.*)

Sometimes a part of the consciousness is seen in the image of a pond, lake or sea. The fish must be the vital mind.

*
**

(*Later I saw my head was a peak of mountain and from there there was a constant fall of water within the heart.*)

The mountain is a very usual symbol of the consciousness with its ascending levels. The flowing of water from the peak indicates some flow from the higher consciousness above.

31-8-1936

*
**

(*During meditation I saw I had no head but only the lower body was meditating.*)

The feeling of having no head usually means that at that time the mental consciousness is no longer imprisoned in the head at the time—but silent and extended.

19-9-1936

*
**

(*The Mother standing on a stair sword in hand demanding sacrifice of my head.*)

The head would mean the mental activities, I suppose.

2-12-1936

*
**

(*A peacock near my head*)

A peacock is the symbol of spiritual victory.

2-12-1936

*
**

(*A couple of white pigeons*)

White would mean purity.

2-12-1936

*
**

(*The Mother sitting on the peak of an icy mountain ; a narrow path leads there and I am gradually advancing towards that.*)

This is simply a symbol of the purity and silence of the higher consciousness which has to be reached by the path of sadhana. The mountain symbolises the difficulty because one has not to slip to one side or the other, but go straight.

*
**

(*A kind of sensation in the crown of my head.*)

It is probably the working of the Force there.

(*Sensation in the upper part of the spine as also in the middle.*)

Also the working of the Force. The spine is the main channel of the descent and ascent of the Force, by which it connects the lower and the higher consciousness together.

6-12-1935

*
**

(*Is there any difference between 'opening' and 'openness'?*)

Opening is the act of opening or else the place or passage through which the concentration or influence pass. Openness is the state of being open.

*
**

(*A voice "Translate the 'Yogic Sadhan'". Was it a right voice?*)

It depends on where it came from—the psychic or the vital. The Yogic Sadhan has its use, but it is not one of the main or most important books published among mine, nor is it my own writing.

6-12-1935

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**

(*You wrote "It must be a consciousness of your own universa being, etc.". What is the meaning of my own universal being?*)

Everyone has a universal consciousness standing around and behind the individualised personality. When one becomes aware of it one feels in contact with the universal self and forces or one with them.

9-9-1936

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**

To overcome all anger will be very good and also the resolution to have no attachments, only to be plunged in the Mother's affection and be her instrument.

*
**

The *ghinghine shuchi vayu* is a weakness not to be indulged by one who wants to do yoga—but we are quite ready to give

you time to get over it. What is serious, is outbursts of this violence on such trivial grounds. This you should not allow to happen again. You must try seriously to gain a greater quiet and a better self-control.

3-11-1933

*
**

The Mother was not at all angry with you. I suppose you expected her to be angry and saw like that ? All the sadhikas do that—and I have not yet been able to cure them of this seeing their own imaginations in the Mother's face or manner.

*
**

If you want to keep the joy, it will be wise not to speak of it to others. Things spoken about get wings and try to escape.

*
**

All faults and errors are redeemed by repentance. Confidence in the Mother, self-giving to the Mother, these if you increase them will bring the change in the nature.

*
**

Radha is the symbol of consecration.

*
**

But in any case you must not get upset over these things. After all, when one comes to an Ashram to do Yoga, one leaves social rules, caste, ceremonial purity etc. behind one. Also one tries to practise *samatā* to all people and all things, because the Divine is everywhere. Why not take that attitude instead of the old one ?

*
**

The Mother gave names for cats because they understand and answer ; she has never given any for birds and does not wish to do it. Now even for cats she is not giving names.

28-4-1932

*
**

It is very silly and childish to have *abhimān* ; for it means that you expect everyone including the Mother and myself to act always according to your ideas and do what you want us to do and never do anything which will not please you ! It is for the Mother to do whatever she finds to be right or necessary ; you must understand that ; otherwise you will always be making yourself miserable for nothing.

28-4-1932

*
**

Bad things. Many things are bad only in the way people look at them. Things which you consider all right, other people call bad; what you think to be bad, others find quite natural.

21-4-1933

*
**

If you want to have knowledge or see all as brothers or have peace, you must think less of yourself, your desires, feelings people's treatment of you, and think more of the Divine—living for the Divine, not for yourself.

25-2-1936

*
**

SRI AUROBINDO

SRI AUROBINDO LITERATURE (1)

THE immense range of the prolific pen of Sri Aurobindo is matched only by the olympian quality of the writing that flows from it. He wrote his first poem in his eleventh year ; his last writing, *The Mind of Light* in his seventy-eighth. The subjects that received the alchemic touch of this divine man are varied : Art, Poetry, Criticism, Philosophy, Religion, Sociology, Polity, History, Yoga—all these are treated with a depth of insight and universality of outlook which bring to the fore their meeting ground in a commonness of purpose. Whatever the period, earlier or later, whatever the subject, the spirit that governs all his writings is the Ideal of Perfection of man, the Gospel of Divine Life on earth. Whether it is the romantic dramas of the early years of his literary activity or the pungent editorials and fiery utterances during the political phase of his meteoric career or it is the metaphysics of his Teaching, the keynote of his writing is always the same—the divine potentiality of man.

And indeed, it could not be otherwise. For, the Truth he came to fulfil, the Ideal for which he devoted the major part of his life on earth is the possibility, nay the inevitability, of a New Life for the human race. This consummation of the aeonic labour of Nature in evolution is sought to be effected by a revolutionary precipitation of its process by which a new Consciousness shall manifest and impel the life on earth, bringing about a radical change in its character ; in a word, deliver human life from the holds of Ignorance, Incapacity and Death into the freedom of a divine Knowledge, Power and Immortality.

Sri Aurobindo develops this theme and expounds it in all the ramifications of a metaphysical system in his basic work

The Life Divine. The means for translating this Doctrine into practice, the experience which gives life to the theory, is described in his other great work *The Synthesis of Yoga*. How this urge in man for a total self-perfection is reflected in the development of society and how this ideal of self-fulfilment can be worked out in collectivity is shown in *The Human Cycle*. *The Ideal of Human Unity* traces the lines on which the far spread peoples of the globe are slowly but steadily moving towards an overt realisation of the Truth of Oneness that is governing their development from within, analyses the nature of the obstructions delaying the achievement and indicates the direction in which the solution is to be found.

Sri Aurobindo then proceeds to see how far this Knowledge of his perception and experience is consistent with the main spiritual and cultural tradition of India and for this purpose takes up the ancient texts of her Scriptures. He goes straight to the core of the hymns of the Rig Veda, bares the thought-structure that is embedded in them and gathers in a methodical form the various hints scattered all over these remnants of a rich hymnal past, signposts of the inner discipline perfected by the Rishis for their self-culture and development. His findings are set forth in the series on the 'Secret of the Veda' and in his translations of a large number of hymns and commentaries on them—now collected together under two titles, *On the Veda* and *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*.

Similarly with the Upanishads. He translates and gives a detailed exposition of the thought in the Isha and Kena Upanishads[1] drawing attention to the comprehensive character of their teaching which embraces the whole world as a purposeful manifestation of the all-pervading Brahman, Brahman that is Knowledge-Power-Bliss. He has besides given free renderings of the Katha, Prashna, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Mundaka and Mandukya

[1] *Isha Upanishad, Kena Upanishad*

texts[1] and annotated upon certain key concepts in the Taittiriya, the Chhandogya[2] and the Brihadaranyaka.[3]

Next, he takes the Gita which records a high water mark reached by the turn for synthesis characteristic of the Indian genius. He expounds with a convincing thoroughness the manifold Way prescribed in it for the application of the gains of the Spirit to the dynamic side of life, activity, as also for the use of action for the growth of the being Godward. These brilliant *Essays on the Gita* are among the most widely read of his writings.

In all these studies, be it noted, Sri Aurobindo does not rely on any of the extant commentaries for arriving at the import of the scriptures. His is a straightforward approach of an open mind and his conclusions are seen to be well tested on internal and circumstantial evidence of the texts themselves.

Besides these major sequences in his writings which we have dwelt upon elsewhere, there is a large number of works,[4] smaller in bulk but not less significant for that reason. We propose, in this series, to introduce to the readers some of these works, notably those which have an important bearing on the practical side, the *sādhanā*, of the Teaching of Sri Aurobindo.

And of them, naturally, first comes THE MOTHER.

(*to be continued*)

M. P. PANDIT

[1] *Eight Upanishads*

[2] Vide *Advent*, Vol. X No. 3

[3] *Pathamandir Annual* No. 12.

[4] There is a considerable mass of poetry by Sri Aurobindo in English the most important of which is the Epic *Savitri : A legend and a symbol* in which he sketches the whole gamut of the spiritual adventure of humanity and embodies in it the course, the scope and achievement of his own mission for the transfiguration of mortal life into a Poem of Immortality. But this is a vast subject by itself and falls outside the limits we have set for ourselves here.

XII

Education

(II)

THE problem of the university students in India has steadily been assuming alarming proportions, and causing serious concern to those who have the good of the country at heart. It is taxing the thought and ingenuity of the educationists, philosophers, statesmen, politicians and the general public alike, all of whom feel that unless it is completely solved, the future of the country is, indeed, in jeopardy. For, the future of the country is in the hands of the rising generation, and if the rising generation is not provided with the right kind of education, it will grow on lines antagonistic to national interest, subversive of national culture, and in all ways prejudicial to the welfare of the country. The problem has many aspects, which include poverty, unemployment, adverse social conditions and conventions, baneful effects of an alien, materialistic civilisation, absence of any living link with the roots of Indian culture etc. But I shall confine myself here only to what the want of a philosophy of education has contributed to the present confusion, and collapse of all standards.

Indian parents seem to have forgotten that education should have a philosophy to sustain and steer it. It is the function of philosophy to expound the basic truths and principles of existence, and the higher values which invest human life with a deep and abiding significance, and point to the ultimate goal and destiny of man. Philosophy gives to education the right direction and an unfailing impetus, so that the latter may not deviate and drift,

and thereby defeat its own purpose. Without a philosophy to steer its course, education invariably ends in a shipwreck, and goes down the swirling waters of selfish interests and transient pursuits. Any wrong type of education, which is devoid of the guidance of a philosophy, is apt to leave most of the deeper faculties of the students undeveloped, and pervert those that are already developed. And an atrophy and a perversion create a gnawing discontent in the inner being. When a natural growth is thwarted or impeded, a sort of inner malaise is the unavoidable consequence; and although the surface mind may not be able to diagnose it, it suffers from it none the less.

In their eagerness for the material well-being of their families, and particularly of their children, parents make certain professions the targets of education. Education is thus used as a means to a career, and students are trained to be careerists. The natural bent and aptitude of the students are hardly taken into account. The sense of vocation is drowned in the avid rush for a profession. This too breeds a secret discontent.

The education imparted in the Indian Universities is a sort of excrescence, having no roots in the soil of the indigenous culture. It does not touch the deeper layers of the students' consciousness. It does not satisfy the secret urge in their racial blood. It does not concern itself with the deepest aspirations of their soul. It imposes upon them ideas and ideals which are products of another type of culture than their own, another civilisation and another mode of life. The garish pomp of a materialistic culture lures them away from the creative centre of their being, and gives rise to an inner tension and conflict. This again is a potent cause of discontent, and of the morbidity and neurosis so common among modern students.

Modern education does not seek to build the character of the students. It does not inculcate any sense of values. It does not foster the growth of faith and the capacity to look beyond the present and soar above the buffets and contingencies of life. It does not fortify the moral stamina of the students and teach

them the inestimable virtues of humility and obedience. The usual result of all this is that the students are apt to lose their nerve and balance, and even often their heads, when confronted with an awkward position.

Godless and soulless, modern education exposes the students to the chill winds of scepticism, blowing from the Western hemisphere. The students easily turn pessimists and cynics, and delight in the destruction of all that has been the mainstay of the life of the nation. Rationalism, scepticism and materialism devastate and desiccate their inner life, and blight all prospects of happiness and harmony. Thrown into the vortex of a ruthless struggle for existence, they feel helpless and hopeless. They have no inner resources to fall back upon. They drift like flotsam on the waters of circumstances. Cruel exigencies of outer life or perverting influences of fallacious ideologies force them into situations and reactions which shame and humiliate their manhood.

Modern education in India does not think it necessary to develop a sense of discipline in the students. Self-discipline, which was a part of the practice of Brahmacharya and the backbone of ancient Indian education, is completely ignored now, because the aim of education is not self-knowledge and self-perfection, but a profession or a career. This lack of discipline can also be traced to the lack of a philosophy of education. Where a philosophy derived from the cultural ethos of the race would have enforced self-discipline and self-control as an indispensable prerequisite of self-perfection, its want in the education of today encourages aggressive self-assertion, degrading self-indulgence, and a most egotistic "individualism", which hugs the chains of slavery in the name of freedom—slavery to the heady impulses and savage passions of the unregenerate nature of man, slavery to the beast in him, which, it should be a fundamental objective of education to reclaim and transform.

The crowning evil resulting from the absence of a philosophy of education and the general sense of frustration and discontent it generates, is a ready susceptibility of the students to the insidious

appeal of a view of life known as Communism. If Indian students had been given an opportunity to discover and understand the values and ideals for which this ancient land and its culture have stood down the ages and been held in universal esteem, they would not have fallen so easy a prey to the dangerous seductions of Communism. For, Communism is based upon postulates and theories which run counter to the whole spirit and tradition of Indian culture. It is the very antithesis of what Indians have held for countless centuries as their highest aim and ideal. The spread of Communism in India is the greatest indictment, the most downright condemnation of the present system of education. It is, indeed, tragic that an ideology, so diametrically opposed to the fundamental concepts of Indian culture, should have gained such an uncanny hold upon the impressionable minds of our youth as to render them not only un-Indian, but anti-Indian in their outlook and action. They do not seem to be aware that by their advocacy of the Communist creed and by their pursuit of Communist policies and tactics, they are destroying the very roots of their own culture, and sapping the very values which have not only sustained India through the ages, but are actually preparing for her resurgence into a greater glory than that of her splendid past. They have been so much blinded by the glamour of this godless creed that they fail to see that Communism is a stark negation of all that is truly high and truly noble in life. It is a negation of God and of the soul of man and its freedom and immortality. It is a negation of the ideal of self-transcendence of the individual, of his release from the toils of the ego, of his self-identification with the Divine and with the whole universe; and, last but not the least, it is a negation of his infinite possibilities of helping humanity on its evolutionary march, and raising it to a higher than the mental consciousness, which alone can neutralise all causes of conflict, discord and suffering. It is a negation of the very thing which it set out to achieve—the socialist equality. It is an uncompromising negation of all that can make for peace and harmony on earth. Wherever the shadow of Communism falls,

strife, violence and disorder rear their unholy heads and make havoc of human happiness and security. It would be transgressing my present limits, if I enter into a detailed and critical analysis of the aims and methods of Communism. I shall simply touch upon a few important points, which have a direct bearing on my subject, and pass on to the other defects of modern system of education.

Communism appeals to the proletarian mentality, the mentality which is moved by the animalhood in man; and it is this which accounts for its rapid and phenomenal spread in all parts of the globe. It is easy to sway the mob mind by inflaming its baser passions and rousing its vengeful instincts. But those who exploit these passions and instincts do not seem to know that they are robbing their victims of all peace and happiness. Money and material comfort do not make a man happy. It is self-control and self-conquest alone that can bring happiness. To incite people to vindictiveness and violence, to sow the seeds of hatred and malice in their hearts, is to poison the very springs of their life and condemn them to utter misery.

The ideal of Indian culture was, in the ancient days of its greatness, the raising of the Shudra to the status of the Brahmin. A Shudra represents the physical man, that is to say, one who knows the body as oneself, and regards its desires and satisfactions as the very stuff and object of existence. His intelligence is not developed, his reason is weak and obscure, and he is innocent of any higher values of life. It was rightly enjoined upon him to develop the qualities of loyalty, obedience, endurance and self-abnegation through the service of those who were superior to him in intelligence and culture, and whose company and contact could not but help his moral and spiritual growth. The Brahmins who promulgated the system of the caste[1] were no epicureans or hedonists, who tried to tie down the Shudras to their personal service, and cut them off from the current of cultural life. They

[1] It is as old as the Vedas, if not older.

were illumined mystics who perceived the Divine in all beings and things, and made no distinction between the high and the low, between themselves and the Shudras, between men and beasts. They were Brahmins by virtue of their unitarian vision, equality and selflessness. They apportioned vocations according to the inner aptitude and competence of persons. They did not have the perverted sense of equality which overlooks all evolutionary distinctions and seeks to level all men down to a dead regimented uniformity.

Dr. Radhakumud Mukherji gives an authentic account of the origin of the caste system and the psychological insight and benevolence that went to its creation :

"...Caste is first adumbrated definitely in the Purusha-sukta of Rigveda (X,90) where the four castes are described as the four limbs of the Purusha, related to one another as parts of a common organism. This idea is fully developed in the Brihadaranyaka (i,4,11 f) : 'Verily, in the beginning, this world was Brahma, one only. Being One, He did not flourish. He projected an excellent form, the Kshatriya, gods like Indra, Varuna, Rudra, Ishana....Yet He did not flourish. He projected the Vaishya, even gods like the Vasus, the Adityas, the Vishvadevas. He did not yet flourish. He then created the Shudra caste, Pushan. This earth is Pushan, for she 'nourishes (root *push*) everything that is.' This passage shows that the completeness of social life requires a variety of groups and functions, all of which are necessary for it. The Shudra is aptly called Pushan, as he is a child, a thorough-bred, of the soil, rooted in the mother-earth, supporting society by the production of food. The tiller of the soil is the foundation of the social structure and remains so to this day. Thus Shruti or Veda does not differentiate between the different castes but treats them as equally indispensable members of the social organism, like the limbs of the body. Even the gods could not complete creation till the Pushan was forthcoming, springing out of the mother-earth, to lay the foundations of eco-

nomic and social life in agriculture. The paramount conception of functions in Caste without any suggestion of social inequalities in status or dignity is also indicated in other significant passages (in the Upanishads)..." [1]

Regarding the education of the Shudras in the Sutra period, the same author says : "There is a passage in Apastamba... which states, 'The knowledge which Shudras and women possess is the completion of all study !' According to the commentator, 'the knowledge which Shudras and women possess' is the knowledge of dancing, acting, music, and other branches of the so-called Arthashastra, the science of useful arts and of trades." [2] In many cases Brahmin teachers taught the Shudras these useful arts and sciences.

It will have been abundantly clear from the above quotations that the caste system, in its inception, was based upon a living and dynamic sense of the organic unity of human society, and a spiritual knowledge of the evolving psychology of men. The shudras were not treated as untouchables, but had a perfect freedom of contact and communication with all grades of society. The life of the nation being polarised to God, all grades of society sought to progress towards Him by a scrupulous performance of their respective functions. It was, indeed, a mounting symphony of the various notes of life.

But it must be admitted that this ideal purity of vocational distinctions gave place, during the latter period of Indian culture, to an ignorant sense of real inequalities, and the caste system petrified into a hereditary institution. There are quite a number of cases recorded in the ancient texts of Shudras attaining to the status and dignity of Brahmins by their knowledge and purity of character. But this flexibility was lost in the period of India's cultural decadence, and a cast-iron rigidity took its place. But whatever its aberrations, the ideal of a coordinated ascent of the whole society towards spiritual perfection must be given its due

[1&2] *Ancient Indian Education* by Radhakumud Mukherji.

recognition today, and sought to be realised in terms and conditions of modern life. The pull of the ideal was from below upwards—from demos to aristos; from the common and the gross, to the noble, the refined, the enlightened; from the crude physical mind to the luminous intelligence and the domains of Spirit. The ideal, in its pristine purity, did not encourage any exclusive and egoistic monopoly of power and position. In fact, as Plato teaches us, it could be realised only by a process of self-abnegation and self-transcendence. Not by the cultivation of the acquisitive and possessive instincts did one rise to Brahminhood, but by a total renunciation of them, and a supreme self-conquest. The path from Matter to Spirit was carefully traced. It was rightly considered harmful to the development of a Shudra who had not evolved beyond the physical mind, to seek to force himself into the position of a Brahmin, and arrogate to himself the powers and privileges which devolve naturally upon superior intelligence and selfless greatness. The adhikara or psychological preparedness of a man was the criterion in the allocation of duties and responsibilities. The blind regimentation of Communism is an ignorant violence against Nature's universal law of diversity in unity. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which is the professed aim of Communism, is a specious pretence for the dictatorship of a powerful bureaucracy. But if the professed aim were ever realised, it would spell the disintegration of human society.

Describing principles and policies, Lenin, the Prophet of Communism says : "We repudiate all morality which proceeds from supernatural ideas or ideas which are outside class conceptions. In our opinion morality is entirely subordinate to the interests of the class war; everything is moral which is necessary for the annihilation of the old exploiting social order and for the uniting of the proletariat....We do not believe in eternal principles of morality....Communist morality is identical with the fight for the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat." "The dictatorship of the proletariat", he says again, "is the rule of the proletariat over the bourgeosie, a rule based upon force enjoying

the sympathy and support of the labouring and exploited masses." Here is an honest declaration of the cult of naked force and a frank repudiation of all moral principles.

Preobrashenki writes : "In the struggle of an exploited class against their enemies, *lying and deceit are often very important weapons*[1] ; all the subterronean work of revolutionary organisations actually depends on overreaching the power of the state."

If Indian students have accepted this creed, this unabashed advocacy of brute force and lying and deceit, they ought to know that they have thereby repudiated the very values for which India stands; they have outraged her soul, and soiled her glorious heritage. They ought to realise that the explosive ideology they have imported from Russia may, unless immediately expelled, blast the very foundations of Indian culture.

But what is it in Communism that has such a strong attraction for the youth of India ? Is it its ideal of equality ? The uplift of the masses ? That was never an unknown ideal, and can be accomplished better and more effectively in other ways.

I shall now compare the behaviour of the modern student, acting under the influence of Communism, with that of a typical student of ancient India, just to show which of the two scores in cultural qualities.

There are many anecdotes in the Upanishads and the Mahabharata, illustrating the loyalty, self-discipline and unquestioning obedience of the students. I propose to quote only one here, in the hope that it will enable the youth of the country to contrast their present behaviour with that of their ancient forbears, and understand what their own race, culture, tradition, and their very soul and blood expect of them. I expect they will profit by the contrast and recollect that India, the Mother of the human race, as Will Durant calls her, is the country of their birth, and that the holy blood of the Rishis still flows in their veins. They will realise to what degeneracy they have been reduced by the sinister

[1] Italics are mine.

influence of an erroneous ideology, and try to make good. They cannot afford to forget Mother India and her ancient greatness, and turn a blind eye to the unprecedented glory towards which she is pressing with an unveiled vision and resurgent vitality.

The story I cite from the Mahabharata is that of Upamanyu, a disciple of Ayodhadhaumya. He was asked by his Guru to take some cows to the forest and tend them. When he returned to the hermitage in the evening, his Guru asked him : "My child, how is it you don't look tired after the whole day's work ? You look rather fresh and bright. What did you eat ?" The disciple replied that he had begged some food and eaten it. "No, my child, you should not eat what you get as alms. You should offer it to me." Upamanyu gladly agreed. From that day on he would offer to his Guru whatever he got as alms. One day his Guru asked him again : "You still look so robust. What do you feed ?" "Sir", replied Upamanyu, "I offer you my first alms, and I beg again to satisfy my hunger." "That is not good. You are depriving others of their share of alms. You should not beg twice", was the command of the Guru. Upamanyu gave up the second begging. After a few days, his Guru inquired again about the cause of his blooming health. "I drink a little milk of the cows." "No, you should offer the milk to me, and not drink it," was another command. The milk was stopped, and still Upamanyu looked so healthy. On his Guru's inquiring again, Upamanyu said that he took only the foam of the milk that was left on the udders of the cows. "The young cattle must be leaving abundant milk out of kindness for you. They are surely depriving themselves of their normal nourishment", was the comment of the Guru. "You should desist from taking the foam too.", was the last command. The disciple obeyed with gladness. But when the day wore on, Upamanyu, overpowered by hunger, ate some leaves which, being poisonous, destroyed his eyesight. Wandering blind in the forest, he fell into a well. The sun had set and night was creeping on. The Guru inquired of the other disciples why Upamanyu had not yet returned from the forest. None knew

where he was. So they all set out in search of him. In the forest when the Guru called to Upamanyu, a voice came from the depth of a well : "Sir, I have lost my eyesight and fallen into this well. Please rescue me." The Guru advised him to pray to Asvinikumaras, the heavenly physicians. Upamanyu prayed, and the two gods arrived. They gave him a cake and said that if he ate it, it would restore him his eyesight. But Upamanyu refused to eat the cake without first offering it to his Guru. The gods told him that long ago they had once given a cake to his Guru and that he had eaten it without having offered it to his own Guru. But Upamanyu was adamant. Whether his vision was restored or not, he could not, he insisted, partake of anything without first consecrating it to his Guru. The gods were greatly pleased. His Guru was gratified, and by his blessing Upamanyu recovered not only his eyesight, but the knowledge of the Brahman and the bliss of immortality.

From modern standards of judgement, which are based upon materialist outlook, it would appear that the Guru was inhumanly cruel, and that Upamanyu was an imbecile. It was evidently foolish of him to obey such a monster of a Guru. If one regards one's body as oneself, the charge is, indeed, justified. But—and here lies the crucial point—if one regards one's soul, and not one's body, as oneself, all seems justified that conduces to the evolution of the soul and the attainment of spiritual freedom. The typical Indian outlook is a spiritual outlook. According to it, the soul is the real man, our imperishable being; and its awakening and development are of supreme importance in any form of education. It is un-Indian to regard the mortal body as the real self. Considered from this standpoint, the test to which Upamanyu was subjected was not an act of cruelty, but of an infinite and compassionate Grace. It evoked his utmost powers of obedience, endurance and self-surrender, and sought, by a supreme effacement of his ego, to release his soul. Upamanyu lost nothing by the ordeal except the desires and preferences of his lower nature, but gained the wideness and freedom, the un-

fading peace and purity of the soul-state. He was lifted from the prison of his body-consciousness to the infinity and immortality of the Brahmic consciousness. If he had insisted on his human rights and the satisfaction of his personal needs and desires, his body would not, of course, have suffered on this occasion, but what he gained by self-abnegation would have remained a very far cry. The animal in him would have continued its dark sway, and the god found no chance of evolving. The self-assertion of the ego forbids the self-expression of the soul.

I do not think I need say much about the behaviour of the students in modern India. The newspapers are full of it. The teachers smart under it, and the educationists are bewildered by it. I do not deny that there are some among the students who are really above criticism; but I am concerned here with the majority, and the majority do not inspire one with hope. But the blame cannot be laid entirely on the students; the teachers also come in for a good share of it. They have failed to live up to the mark, and command the respect and obedience of their students. They are hardly conscious of the seriousness and sacredness of their responsible vocation. They have not tried to win the hearts of their students, and establish a living, intimate relation with them.

We shall find, when we come to understand the Mother's scheme of education, how great an importance she attaches to the responsibility of the parents and teachers. The re-education of the educators, that is, parents and teachers, must be the first step in any reconstruction of education.

It is in the typically Indian perspective as revealed by the story of Upamanyu that the Indian youth has to look at himself, his life and his action. He has to base his whole life on the ancient but ever-new ideal of Brahmacharya, which is a comprehensive ideal of self-discipline and self-mastery. It is aimed at the conquest of the beast in man, so that his soul may emerge and use the conquered and controlled beast as an instrument for its self-expression in life. It is only when man has controlled the beast in him that he becomes truly human. Life is a field for the evolu-

tionary transition from an animal humanity to a divine humanity. Discipline is not a moral rule of self-repression, but the creation of an order and a harmony in place of the chaos that reigns in normal human nature. It is putting each element of our complex nature in its place, and making it subserve the creative ends of our central being, the divine soul. It is the only means of a spontaneous flowering of our integral personality.

To neglect self-discipline is to follow the blind impulses of our unpurified nature, to allow the ego to assert its selfish rights, to forget oneself so far as to behave like savages and wild beasts, to be the sport of unbridled passions, to degrade and darken oneself, and forfeit all claim to culture and civilisation. It is, for an Indian, to disgrace his national being and its immemorial culture. It is to sacrifice one's soul for the aggrandisement of the ego. It is, in fact, a form of spiritual suicide.

The day when the Indian youth realises the absolutely un-Indian character of the Communist creed, and turns his back upon it, will be a red-letter day of his deliverance. A new vista of light and happiness will open before him. Mother India will reveal to his wondering vision the infinite riches of Spirit she has treasured through unnumbered ages. By self-discipline, by the development of humility and obedience, patience and endurance, peace and purity, he will ascend to the heights of his manhood[1] and lead his motherland towards the realisation of her great destiny. Indian to the marrow of his bones, he will be able to embrace the whole world in a spirit of universal love. A new dawn will break out of the darkness of his present chaos. The education that he will receive and, in his turn, impart to the coming generation, will be a means of self-transcendence and self-perfection. It will contribute to the awakening of the soul in man, and lead him to God. It will educe or release into expression the mighty creative energies that are locked in his inner being. It will change not only the face of India, but the face of the world.

[1] It is man-making education all round that we want.—Vivekananda

I have dwelt at some length on this subject of discipline and self-conquest, because it is the corner stone of the Indian ideal of education, and a basic element of the Mother's scheme of integral education.

RISHABHCHAND

THE LIFE DIVINE

(An Outline)

Vol. II

Chapter XX

The Philosophy of Rebirth

BIRTH seems to be the beginning of life, and death the end, but both are a mystery of the physical universe. Birth is not merely a constant outburst of life in matter, for life can create matter. But in the birth of life there is also the soul element.

Man's intellect cannot find a solution to the problem of what we were before birth and what we are after death, for it lies beyond the physical consciousness and memory. The solution depends on the source and object of the cosmic movement.

If all things were merely Matter then we have only the before of the body to consider, which grows out of physical elements into the individual body, through a process of heredity. The after of the body would be the dissolution into the material elements. The only immortality would be a survival of the activity of the conscious being in the general mind and life of humanity. But since Matter cannot explain even the existence of Mind, we must examine other hypotheses.

There is a religious myth that God constantly creates immortal souls out of his own being, and causes them to enter into material bodies. Although it may satisfy faith, this explanation cannot satisfy reason and philosophy. Firstly it implies that beings have a beginning in time with the birth of the body, but have no end in time, by the death of the body. Secondly it assumes that

an individual is born with a ready-made mass of qualities and capacities either through heredity or through the fiat of the Creator.

If there is an exception to the philosophic law that all that begins must have an end, (or if it has no end it cannot have a beginning) then it must mean that birth is spirit descended into matter by the divine law. This spirit or soul, then, is immortal. If the body is a temporary dwelling of the soul then for immortality it must have a subtle psychic body and also have a pre-existence to the material body on which it has no dependence.

If we see a certain stage of development in time, there must have been a past. Thus the soul must have been prepared in precedent lives for its present life. Or if it takes up a ready-made life then the soul must be quite independent of that life; for the immortal soul must be eternal, beginningless in the past and endless in future. And such a Person can only manifest in a mould of Nature.

There is also the hypothesis of a temporary or apparent soul, perhaps created from the cosmic Inconscient to which it must return (as stated in certain modern ideas). Or alternatively there may be an eternal Becoming, manifesting as cosmic Life-force and operating as Matter objectively and as Mind subjectively. There is also the old theory of the sole-existing Superconscient which creates by Maya or illusion, this world. Or there is the Buddhist theory of a Nihil or Nirvana, with its eternal becoming or Karma which creates an illusory soul. In all these three explanations the apparent soul is not immortal but has a beginning and end in time, and hence rebirth is not necessary or it is illusory.

When we suppose the one Eternal Existence to be a Becoming, or an immortal Being or a formless Non-being, the soul is only a stream of phenomena of consciousness, illusory or temporary and not eternal. An eternal Becoming or impersonal Being is the real support, not a real, ever-existent Person. According to these views, when the form of consciousness dissolves, the corresponding consciousness dissolves with it. Only the One which forms all

endures. (Even the theory of Karma does not demand a soul for its continuity of action).

Modern thought, even more than the old theories, denies rebirth, since it is an unproven process of the material universe. It only sees a mental consciousness associated with bodily life, and with no sign of previous individual existence, and also no sign of subsequent existence. The only immortality is the seed of life transmitted by the parents to the children. Only the elements, of which things are built up, persist. Behind the mental and physical phenomena is the universal Life which has created a real world, but there is no sign in the conscious personality of a persistent soul or psychic entity that outlasts death. Rebirth does not enter into this view.

If it is found that the human personality survives the death of the body then we would have to broaden our idea of a temporary existence, and admit a wider range of Life and an individuality not dependent on the material body. We might have to readopt the ancient idea of a subtle body inhabited by a soul or psychic entity which carries the mental consciousness. There could then be the persistence of this subtle form after death. In that case the psychic entity could either have pre-existed in a subtle form before birth or have developed in the material world itself.

In terms of the terrestrial evolution we see that the human soul may have evolved in lower forms such as the animal, before man was created. By a sudden growth of mental consciousness the evolving Life might have been able to build a subtle mental form to house the mental being. We might believe either in the transmigration of souls from the animal to the human being, or that the power to survive the death of the physical body only arrives with the human stage of the evolution. But if the soul is a persistent-evolving entity then the Indian idea of passage to other worlds and a return to earth would be possible though it might not be inevitable for the soul to return to the terrestrial life-evolution.

Even on this vitalistic theory the soul personality might be a phenomenal creation, although of a subtler character. For admitting Karma as the action of the universal Life-force, the individual may be nothing but the continuity of the stream of personality. Or we might admit a universal self, or cosmic spirit, as the primal reality with Life as its power. The law of rebirth would here be possible but not inevitable.

The Adwaita (of the Mayavada) based its theory of rebirth on the old knowledge of the communication between the supraphysical planes and the earth; and the fact that the supraphysical consciousness was prior to the physical creation which is secondary and dependent. This theory admitted the passage of the personality from this to other worlds and a return to earth. In the Buddhistic view it was not a real rebirth of a real spiritual Person; while in the Adwaita view the spirituality was there but individuality was apparent and rebirth only part of the cosmic illusion.

Since the Self was denied in Buddhistic thought, rebirth meant a continuity of ideas, sensations and actions. In Adwaita (Mayavada), an individual self (Jivatman) was admitted, though it was ultimately apparent and not real, since the self in its true nature is apart from the universe. The whole mass of individual and cosmic experience are thus temporary phenomena, and the ego itself a creation of the great Illusion. The aim of life would therefore be to rise into the superconsciousness of That which is for ever unborn, timeless and ineffable.

From this point of view the individual has no enduring foundation, and manifestation could only be the expression of a cosmic will. The will to creation would then fulfil itself through temporary individualities. Each formation would be as a wave surging up from the universal sea, and then sinking back into the Silence. There would be no room for an evolutionary progress through the mechanism of rebirth.

But it is conceivable that the Eternal Spirit may have chosen to manifest in the body, passing through a cycle of births and

finally withdrawing from individualisation. But such a cycle would have no significance, except a play or Lila. But if we admit that the Spirit has involved itself in the Inconscience and is manifesting in the individual through an evolutionary gradation, then the ascent of the individual has a cosmic significance and the rebirth of the soul is a natural consequence of the truth of the Becoming and its law. Rebirth would then be indispensable for the spiritual evolution.

A spiritual evolution in Matter means that the universe is a self-creative process of a supreme Reality, and where all things are the spirit's powers and forms of manifestation. This secret Reality is an infinite existence, consciousness, force, and infinite delight, and its divine Supermind or Gnosis has arranged the cosmic order through three subordinate terms, Mind, Life and Matter. The material universe is the lowest stage in the involution of this triune Reality into an Inconscient; and out of this the manifested being is evolving. That which is involved must therefore evolve; and since it is the self that is concealed, this evolution can only recover what has been lost or submerged through the conscious individual being. The importance of the individual increases as he rises in the scale of consciousness. And this importance rests on the fact that the individual as Self is as real as the cosmic Self, and both are powers of the Eternal. On this basis we see that the individual is a persistent reality and that rebirth is a necessity.

We see then that it is no longer sufficient to suppose an illusory or temporary individual. Although in the world we see a transient individuality, yet inwardly we experience the individual as an eternal portion of the power of the Eternal, and Cosmos itself is revealed as the manifestation of the eternal One. Behind our changing personality is the true Person, or spiritual Individual, which is the One extended in universality and existing in each being. It is thus that the individual experiences oneness with all, as well as the realisation of transcendence in which all universal unity is founded.

If the aim were only eternal enjoyment then there would be no need for evolution and rebirth. But since there has been an involution in which oneness has been lost, a play of separative difference has become the dominant factor. This has culminated through the dividing Mind in the formation of the separate ego. Matter, which is the ultimate involution of the Divine Nature, forms the solid base for this play of divine. Supporting all is the Inconscience, which is really an exclusive concentration of the all-conscient Spirit. Thus the phenomenal universe is created with separative forms, and the body becomes the starting point for the development of life, mind and spirit in the physical existence. The appearance of the body is what we call birth, within which the progressive development of conscious being towards unity takes place. Life in the physical world is thus a progress of the soul proceeding by birth into the body.

In the evolution of conscious being there must be a preparing past and fulfilling hereafter. A single life in the body cannot be the rule of the individual soul's existence. The individual life must follow a law of progression as the cosmic life, and follow the cosmic purpose. Life upon earth is a great and slow development. Human life itself is only a term in a graded series. The ascent of individual soul-consciousness can only take place by rebirth within the ascending order.

The human soul is not a free wanderer in its life in the physical universe, especially in the beginning stages. Only the spiritual impersonal self enjoys the freedom of the Divine Nature, which presides over the evolutionary development. It is the soul personality which must follow the laws and lines of the evolutionary progression. Thus the soul must go through the stages of cosmic expression.

The soul in purely material forms is subject to the nescience, in which the universal Spirit is wholly involved. The soul in vital forms has a partial light of consciousness, and in the animal mind and in the more outwardly conscious soul of man consciousness becomes progressively manifest in Nature. While the uni-

versal development takes place through an ordered variation in the series of its evolved forms, the individual soul follows this cosmic series and manifests what is prepared in the universality. The universal principle in humanity is developing all that has grown into humanity from below, preparing to grow to supermind and spirit and divine universality. Thus the human soul has experienced the lower forms of life prior to the human evolution. As the human he accepts the inner and outer forms of humanity, but he is not limited by this form, as he was previously not limited, and can pass to a greater self-expression.

Since the human soul is immortal we cannot suppose that it has always existed—and must always exist—on this level. The spirit in fact is the creator of mind and body forms; it is not developed out of these forms. Spirit only appears to evolve out of mind and body because it is manifesting in them, and it is Spirit that is taking them to higher levels. Thus the spirit evolves by successive forms and successive strata of consciousness. The soul is not bound by the formula of mental humanity; it had a prehuman past, and has a superhuman future.

Our knowledge of Nature, and of human nature also, justifies this view of the birth of the soul from form to form until it reaches manifested consciousness at the human level. Nature proceeds from stage to stage, taking up the past and transforming it into the material of a new development. Human nature has all the earth-past in it, the animal is still present, and the material and vital stages are apparent in his make-up. This does not mean that material Nature developed first a life and body, into which a soul later descended. There is no such gulf between soul and body, life and mind. Matter is in fact substance and power of spirit, and as such must have been ensouled from the very beginning of the evolution.

Human birth, then, has resulted from a long succession of rebirths in the lower form of life on earth. We have therefore to see the further progress of the soul from the human level. First we should ask if the human can retrogress to the animal level. It

is very unlikely that Nature should reverse the process, except where the conversion from animal soul to human had not been decisive enough to carry it forward. There is the basis for the popular belief in retrogression, but it is not the normal rule of Nature.

Spiritual evolution demands a succession of human births, for there are various grades and levels of human consciousness and experience, from the primitive type to the philosophic thinker and religious reformer. There are yet higher steps for man, and the highest point must be reached before man can transcend his human birth. The opening out of the spirit in man must be made, through a knowledge of his real self, by leading the spiritual life.

The flowering of the spirit in human life is possible if there are other powers of Mind beyond the intellect, which can embody themselves in the ascending line of rebirth. If supermind is a power of consciousness concealed in the evolution then man must ascend to the supramental nature and being.

This is the philosophical foundation for a belief in rebirth, based on the evolutionary principle in Nature and the reality of the soul. If the soul is only temporary then rebirth need not be an evolutionary necessity. Or if the soul is not dependent on the body and there is no evolution of the soul, then rebirth is not necessary. But if there is an evolution of consciousness in an evolutionary body and a soul inhabiting the body, then rebirth is a necessary process and the promise of the being's completeness in the evolution.

N. PEARSON

SRI AUROBINDO AND THE FUTURE OF THE STATE

(Continued from the last issue)

Beyond the National State

The present drift towards an omnipotent national state is the prelude to its end. The advent of a new order is rendered certain by the moral collapse of the old. It is reflected in the defeat of the myth of racial and cultural superiority and the consequent shock to collective egoism. So, just as in the past the clans, tribes or regional groups were subordinated and absorbed by the larger nation-group, so now, it is the turn of nation-groups to be subordinated and eventually absorbed in the complete human group of united mankind. The nation-group was formed to carry the human race to a further stage of consolidation and development. So long as this labour of formation continues the further expansion of the group must wait and authority and order may have to be accepted as inevitable necessity. But if and when the aggregate feels an inner impulse for expansion, it bursts its old bonds and discards the means of formation as obstacles to growth. The appearance of the human world order with the watchwords of liberty and cooperation becomes inevitable.

It was expected that a new order of free cooperation among free and equal citizens in a national commonwealth may be brought about under the guidance of a wise and liberal central authority expressing the will of the people. This expectation has not been fulfilled. The secular, democratic and socialistic state, no less than its monarchical, ecclesiastical and aristocratic predecessor, has sacrificed liberty and equality to collective efficiency. The cause is psychological. Liberty and efficiency, individual and authority cannot be satisfactorily reconciled so long as man,

individual and aggregate, lives by egoism. It is possible only after he has passed through a great psychological transformation and realised the third and the greatest of the triune gospel of the French Revolution, viz., fraternity.

> "That no mechanism social, political, religious has ever created or can create; it must take birth in the soul and rise from hidden and divine depths within." [1]

The nation idea has already been surpassed through the creation of universal empires, either of the centralised despotic type as the Russian of the Romanoffs and the German of the Hohenzollerns or of the federal colonial type as the French or the British. But they were imposed by external force and failed to generate a psychological unity beyond the nation principle. Even the British who liberalised their empire into a commonwealth of free nations could not produce the sense of inner oneness. There was no living stalk to hold together the clusters but only the joining threads of a bunch or bouquet, artificial threads of administrative unity which might be snapped any moment by the outburst of centrifugal forces.

The World State

The next possibility that suggests itself under the present psychological and material conditions is a multinational world state. It may appear as the solvent of the present tensions and discords and as a safeguard against another war of which the consequences everyone shudders to think of. An international body started with the limited purpose of settling disputes, maintaining peaceful relations and applying punitive sanctions and economic blockade against a delinquent state may possibly grow into a central authority with legislative, executive, military and

[1] *The Ideal of Human Unity*, (Sri Aurobindo Ashram), P. 130

economic power. Legislation will be necessary to avoid fresh convulsions, to remove injustice and inequality which lie at the source of disputes. The legislative power will gradually encroach upon the national sphere. This will necessitate the augmentation of executive power and organisation confined in the first instance to things of insistent international importance. But since the sphere of international relations is constantly widening the world state will be extending its right of interference in affairs now regarded as strictly of domestic concern. This, in its turn, will lead to the assumption of military force and economic power. The international authority will hold the sole command of all military force and use it for the policing of the nations. National armies will disappear like the old baronial armies which they had superseded. The power of economic boycott now vested in the international organisation against an offending state will be used as a normal punitive measure and this will necessitate the control of commercial, industrial and economic life of the whole human race.

In this process the nation states will be reduced to provinces of the world state. All control,—legislative, administrative, judicial, military and economic will be centralised in one international authority. Even culture will not be left in possession of the groups. If national sentiment goes down cultural diversities will have no longer lease of life. Already the differences of culture are being resolved under the pressure of increasing interchange of ideas, forms, standards and values. And science, the great leveller, is bringing a uniformity in all the spheres of life and thought. A common world culture is in the offing which may soon dissolve the oppositions of race and language against a general uniformity.

The world state will bring some positive advantages. It will assure peace all over the globe. Frictions and disturbances will be minimised. The co-ordinated effort and intelligence of mankind will secure an unparallelled development of material comfort and well-being. Scientific efficiency, economy of effort and elimination of conflict and waste will lead to a tremendous in-

crease of knowledge and mechanical power for the betterment of life. Traffic of ideas and closer mutual understanding will introduce new motives and forms in philosophy, literature and art. A thoroughgoing state socialism will come into existence and usher in an unprecedented phase of peace, prosperity and mechanical efficiency.

But after a time, because the whole fabric is mechanical and not the growth of an inner sense of unity, the force will die down, human mind will reach a static condition and then fall a prey to stagnation and decay. The all-regulating socialistic world state will then be the target of attack.

> "This criticism, if it is to look not to the dead past but to the future, could only take one direction, the direction of anarchism, whether of the spiritual Tolstoian kind or else the intellectual anarchism which is now the creed of a small minority but still a growing force in many European countries. It would declare the free development of the individual as its gospel and denounce government as an evil and no longer at all a necessary evil. It would affirm the full and free religious, ethical, intellectual and temperamental growth of the individual from within as the true ideal of human life and all else as things not worth having at the price of the renunciation of this ideal, a renunciation which it would describe as the loss of his soul. It would preach as the ideal of society a free association or brotherhood of individuals without government or any kind of compulsion."[1]

If this opposition tries to translate itself into action, the world state will be shaken at its root. Should it then accept the challenge and suppress the destructive movement by force? This course will involve it in the regulation of thought, in the killing of free creative impulse in society and thereby hasten its own end.

[1] *The Ideal of Human Unity*, P. 294

The alternative is to consent to its own liquidation and to clear the way for a free stateless society.

Free World Union

So the world state, whatever prospects it may have for the immediate future, cannot be the suitable form for the new order. The only other possible alternative which has a chance of endurance is a free world union or a federation of free nationalities. It is a unity of diversity based on free self-determination. A mechanical world unity will treat mankind as one nation and divide it into geographical groups for administrative convenience. In a free union the geographical principle will be subordinate to the psychological principle. The people will group themselves according to their natural affinities and none will be compelled to join another people on any consideration of convenience or political necessity. Such widely distant countries like England and Australia might group together while neighbours like England and Ireland might stand apart.

> "Unity would be the largest principle of life, but freedom would be its foundation-stone." [1]

The second principle of a free union is the elimination of war. The psychological condition in which a free world union will be possible will obviate the present discords which offer insuperable difficulties. Neither the urge nor the fear of aggression will exist any longer. So a forced union of political and military necessity will be a thing of the past. There will be no case for enlarging a community by inclusion of large masses of men and territories since all differences are settled by agreement and failing that, by arbitration.

The third condition is the arrangement of economic life by mutual agreement. All exploitation of country by country, of class by class will cease. The differences between advanced and

[1] *The Ideal of Human Unity*. P. 332

undeveloped countries will gradually fade out. The world's resources will be shared and allocated to suit the conveniences of all and production will be carried on with economy of effort and materials. The basic constituents of the union will not be huge aggregations but small simple varied organisms so as to give full scope to the creative power of every individual in the groups.

It is not possible to give the precise outline of the new set up. A world parliament composed of elected representatives will obviously not be a fit instrument to guide the affairs of such a varied and complex union. A federation of the American type will be equally inappropriate to meet the extensive diversity and freedom of the component parts.

> "Rather some kind of confederation of the peoples for common human ends, for the removal of all causes of strife and difference, for interrelation and the regulation of mutual aid and interchange, yet leaving to each unit a full internal freedom and power of self-determination, would be the right principle of this unity."[1]

The question may arise how such a loose unity will check the separative spirit and clash of interests which may rear their heads. A unitary system, it may be argued, is better suited to efface these tendencies and fight them at their source and thus is more likely to endure. The answer is that the tendency of opposition, separateness and variability can never be effaced. If these are suppressed by force, the result is a lifeless unity which is sure to break down with the first resurgence of life. The only proper way is to reconcile them, accommodate them in a living elastic framework which perpetually adjusts itself to new phenomena. The free union will give full opportunity for intellectual and psychological changes. The individuals and the groups will be held together by the living idea of humanity, the religion

[1] "The Ideal of Human Unity" P. 339

of humanity which will supersede the national idea and therewith the main source of fissiparous tendencies.

Advent of the New Order

In the present age mind is only an instrument of life and matter and knowledge is devoted to the utmost expansion of the vital and physical life. The old vital and material primitive barbarian has resurged in a civilised form.

> "Man has created a system of civilisation which has become too big for his limited mental capacity and understanding and his still more limited spiritual and moral capacity to utilise and manage, a too dangerous servant of his blunderous ego and its appetites."[1]

Science has placed at his disposal some of the secrets of the universal force. But this force is used by individual or communal ego, no attempt is made to utilise it for the discovery of a higher truth and a fuller life, a true unity. As a result there is only clash of ideas and interests, increasing hunger, unrest, economic nostrums, a confusing medley of slogans and a formidable rivalry of power.

> "The titanic development of the vital life which followed is ending as the Titans always end; it lit its own funeral pyre in the conflagration of a world-war, its natural upshot, a struggle between the most 'efficient' and 'civilised' nations for the possession and enjoyment of the world, of its wealth, its markets, its available spaces, and inflated and plethoric commercial expansion, largeness of imperial size and rule."[2]

[1] *The Life Divine*, Vol. II. Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1944. P. 925

[2] *The Human Cycle*. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1949. P. 296. This was written before the second world war. Since then the nuclear weapon has appeared to add fuel to the 'funeral pyre'.

This is the way how Nature clears its path for the unfoldment of Spirit. If necessary, she will set the stage for another holocaust to facilitate the advent of a stable international order founded on mutual trust and cooperation. Already the idea of a new order is abroad. Internationalism is breaking national walls. The world is getting smaller and there is increasing exchange of goods and ideas. There is increasing interdependence for the necessities of life. Science is ever forging new contacts for the peoples conquering distance and prejudice. A sort of international mind is growing and people having cosmopolitan habits and ideas have claimed to be citizens of the world.

But this change is visible only in the outward form. It is not deeply rooted in psychology. Unity must come first in the mind and then assert itself to mould the outward form. In the age of reason the idea of human unity is obliged to mask its spiritual character and to appeal to the outer rather than to the inner being. Its only contribution is to expedite the change in the inner life by offering a better field for its growth.

Yet the consummation is inevitable. The Spirit which is in man must have its fullness. To exist fully is to exist universally. Man cannot continue his existence in his restricted ego which is constructed by his rational mind. The age of reason is visibly running itself out. Science has overshot itself. It is now clear that the knowledge of the physical world, of man's vital needs which science can give, is not the whole of knowledge; that man is more a mental than a physical and vital being. The knowledge of science is being followed up by a mounting flood of psychic research which is going to open a new vista before mankind. The study of the inner self brings man face to face with the soul in him and in the world. He comes across a tool far more powerful than his reason. He lives more and more in the soul and enlightens his reason, conducts his action with its deeper light and power.

> "In this process the rationalistic ideal begins to subject itself to the ideal of intuitional knowledge and a deeper

self-awareness; the utilitarian standard gives way to the aspiration towards self-consciousness and self-realisation; the rule of living according to the manifest laws of physical Nature is replaced by the effort towards living according to the veiled Law and Will and Power active in the life of the world and in the inner and outer life of humanity."[1]

Democracy, Socialism, Anarchism

The progress of reason in the political order is passing through three successive stages :

"The first individualistic and increasingly democratic with liberty for its principle, the second socialistic, in the end perhaps a governmental communism with equality and the State for its principles, the third—if that ever gets beyond the stage of theory—anarchistic in the higher sense of that much-abused word, either a loose voluntary co-operation of a free communalism with brotherhood or comradeship and not government for its principle."[2]

The democratic ideal, in actual practice, brings the rule of an economically dominant class over the more numerous and ignorant mass. But the urge for freedom and equality which is the gift of democracy stimulates the masses to assert their rights. The result is a war of classes. In this process develops a perpetual strife of parties "an impotent and sterilising chaos of names, labels, programmes, war-cries." Increasing competition in industry and trade intensifies the conflict which ends in the survival "not of the spiritually, rationally or physically fittest, but of the most

[1] "The Human Cycle" P. 32
[2] Ibid. P. 240

fortunate and vitally successful." Obviously, this is not a rational order.

The failure of democracy paves the way for socialism. Due to the accident of its origin it begins with class war and assumes an industrial appearance.

> "Its true nature, its real justification is the attempt of the human reason to carry on the rational ordering of society to its fulfilment, its will to get rid of this parasitical excrescence of unbridled competition, this giant obstacle to any decent ideal or practice of human living. Socialism sets out to replace a system of organised economic battle by an organised order and peace."[1]

This is not possible on the basis of democratic liberty. The demand for a more rational well-distributed freedom shifts the emphasis on equality, not merely political but also social, equal opportunity, equal status. This, again, is not possible so long as inherited property exists. Hence the right of property is attacked. The community comes in to own and administer it. In course of time it comes to control the whole life of the individual. The will of the community (or of a group acting on its behalf) becomes all in all. It claims to decide not only the principles and details of the political and economic order, but

> "the whole life of the community and of the individual as a working, thinking, feeling cell of this life, the development of his capacities, his actions, the use of the knowledge he has acquired, the whole ordering of his vital, his ethical, his intelligent being. For so only can the collective reason and intelligent will of the race overcome the egoism of individualistic life and bring about a perfect principle and rational order of society in a harmonious world."[2]

[1] "The Human Cycle" P. 248
[2] Ibid. P. 250

The democratic socialists try to avoid this total absorption of the individual in the community. They try to retain democratic freedom while accepting the compulsions of the collectivist idea and are led into strange dilemmas. The collectivist idea must have its turn and the socialist who falters in the middle of the course will perish without trying his own possibilities. This hesitation of social democracy between the opposing principles of socialistic regimentation and democratic liberty accounts for its failure in central Europe and Russia when it had every chance on its side and for its replacement by the more vigorous forces of communism and fascism. The natural outcome of socialism is totalitarianism, i.e., strict governance of the total life of society, making short shrift of both liberty and equality. The only liberty left will be the freedom to obey the state, the only equality the association of all in a Spartan life of service to the state. The deadly quarrel between communism and fascism is

> "a blood-feud of kinsmen fighting for the inheritance of their slaughtered parents—Democracy and the Age of Reason. There is the seizure of the life of the community by a dominant individual leader, Fuhrer, Dux, dictator, head of a small active minority, the Nazi, Fascist or Communist party, and supported by a militarised partisan force; there is a rapid crystallisation of the social, economic, political life of the people into a new rigid organisation effectively controlled at every point; there is the compulsory casting of thought, education, expression, action into a set iron mould, a fixed system of ideas and life-motives, with a fierce and ruthless, often a sanguinary repression of all that denies and differs; there is a total unprecedented compression of the whole communal existence so as to compel a maximum efficiency and a complete unanimity of mind, speech, feeling, life."[1]

[1] "The Human Cycle" P. 256

This is the end of the age of reason.

At this stage the rational democratic idea falls back upon the third form of society with the essential rather than formal liberty and equality. Anarchism is sure to develop in proportion as the pressure of society on the individual grows. There is the egoistic vitalistic anarchism which reacts against authority with violence and claims the right of man to live his own life. There is also a higher intellectual anarchism which revolts against an exaggerated social principle, which decries all government of man by man as a violation of the benign principle of nature which will otherwise prevail for the perfection of the human race. According to this doctrine if governmental compulsion is removed man will live with his fellow men by free agreement and cooperation.

Anarchism : Intellectual and Spiritual

For this great consummation the intellectual anarchist relies on reason and love which are inherent in man. The enlightened mind which claims its own freedom will recognise the same freedom in others. A just equation of rights will emerge. This might be sufficient if men could live in isolation with only a few necessary contacts with each other. But the points of contact are innumerable and there is a common life and a common aspiration without which humanity cannot grow to its fullest possibilities. To ensure coordination in this vast field of common life a power more than only enlightened intellect is necessary. This is love, fellow-feeling, natural sympathy. These two human powers, reason and love, will lead man towards a free cooperative communism where labour and property will be for the benefit of all.

The logical mind building this utopia does not take sufficient account of the infra-rational element in man, the vital egoism which is the most powerful part of his nature and defeats in the end all calculations of idealising reason and undoes the rational

system keeping only the little it can assimilate to its own need and purpose. So, even if a free communism could be established it is bound to give way either to a renewed collectivism or to disruption.[1]

Spiritual anarchism comes nearer the final outcome. The solution lies not in reason but in the spiritual potentialities of the soul.

> "It is a spiritual, a greater than the rational enlightenment that can alone illumine the vital nature of man and impose harmony on its self-seekings, antagonisms and discords. A deeper brotherhood, a yet unfound law of love is the only sure foundation possible for a perfect social evolution, no other can replace it. But this brotherhood and love will not proceed by the vital instincts or the reason where they can be met, baffled or deflected by opposite reasonings and other discordant instincts. Nor will it found itself in the natural heart of man where there are plenty of other passions to combat it. It is in the soul that it must find its roots... so only can egoism disappear and the true individualism of the unique godhead in each man found itself on the true communism of the equal godhead in the race;"[2]

In the spiritualised society as dreamed by the spiritual anarchist each man will be the divine law, a soul living in the divine, not an ego living in the self. "His life will be led by the law of his own divine nature liberated from the ego."[3] There is no further quarrel between law and liberty. The internal urge and the external necessity meet at the same point. Liberty becomes the freedom to obey the law of one's own being. True unity which arises from within has no need of external law and order.

[1] The Marxist faith in a free classless stateless communal life coming after a phase of state socialism is still less a possibility. "It is not likely that the living State machine once in power with all that are interested in its maintenance would let go its prey or allow itself to be abolished without a struggle." *The Human Cycle* 252, f.n.

[2] Ibid. P. 273f. [3] Ibid. P. 321

Dawn of Divine Life

The spiritual order has sent signs of its advent in intellectual forms. The religion of humanity, the idea that mankind is a divine reality to be worshipped and served by man was born in the mind of eighteenth century rationalists who presented humanitarianism as a substitute for formal ecclesiastical religion. It helped to produce the movement for international peace, for social justice and respect for liberty and equality. Its further progress will lead to the abolition of war, of cruelty in any form of degradation of any human being as an individual or as a class, of exploitation of man by man, class by class or nation by nation. Man will be regarded as sacred,—his body, life, heart and mind, irrespective of race, creed, colour, etc. His body will be freed from violence, protected against disease. His life will be prolonged and ennobled, his heart will be protected from mechanisation, his mind will be released from all bonds and sent to conquer new fields of knowledge for the service of humanity. Between the individual and humanity there will be the nation or the community having the fullest scope of self-development to enrich the attainments of mankind. Such is the intellectual religion of humanity, the idea of human unity as it appears in the intellectual age.

But this is not the end. The consciousness of unity which is an intellectual realisation must stabilise itself upon a deeper foundation. Human race must be unified by an inner oneness. The ascent of man cannot stop at the intellect. From the rational he must resurge into the glories of spiritual existence.

> "Man, the individual, has to become and to live as a universal being; his limited mental consciousness has to widen to the super-conscient unity in which each embraces all; his narrow heart has to learn the infinite embrace and replace its lusts and discords by universal love ...; his very physical being has to know itself as no

separate entity but as one with and sustaining in itself the whole flow of the indivisible Force that is all things; his whole nature has to reproduce in the individual the unity, the harmony, the oneness-in-all of the supreme Existence-Consciousness-Bliss."[1]

Critique

To sum up : evolution is the progressive unfoldment of Spirit, through matter, life, mind and soul. Society, likewise, is revealing the Spirit successively through the vital, mental and the supramental plane. In this process it expands into larger and larger aggregates. The present aggregate is the nation, a psychological unit in the mechanical form of the state. The state is a machine for the rational satisfaction of the needs of living. As the nation expands into the next larger aggregate, i.e., humanity, man is elevated from the rational to the supramental plane of the Spirit. The national state may be replaced by a world state during the transitional period. But as man discovers the deeper unity in the soul the state and its artificial constraints fade away. It is replaced by an order governed by the inner law of man, an anarchist order of free world union based on freedom, diversity, unity and peace. The idea of human unity, still amorphous in its intellectual forms, will gradually crystallise into a spiritual realisation and will transmute humanity into divinity.

It is a wellnigh impossible adventure to bring the supramental within the reach of the rational mind. If Sri Aurobindo has done this unique task it is because modern man, at the summit of his intellectual capacity, is searching for a soul; it is because reason, now at the height of its power, is looking for something beyond. Yet reason is the ladder for the ascent. Sri Aurobindo aims at unfathomable mysteries but his method is rational, his materials strictly historical and factual. He looks beyond only when the

[1] *The Life Divine*, Vol. I. Arya Publishing House, Calcutta, 1943. P. 133

light of reason ends. He does not build a utopia or preach a dogma. He is extremely cautious about prediction, about the process or duration of the change and he is not even fully sure that human species will rise to its potentiality and attain the divine life. He does not accept the role of a prophet which he is. He does not found a new order of faith taking his as the last words of wisdom. He warns that the gnostic has to go deeper and deeper in search of the truth and not rest on what has been said.[1] His ego is completely dissolved in his philosophy.

Since Sri Aurobindo is neither a dogmatist nor a doctrinaire, it is futile to expect in him a solution of all problems and an answer to all queries. He carries conviction on fundamentals but leaves doubt on details. A few of these may be raised for examination.

The way of the Spirit is to realise first an inner unity and then to express it in the outward form of the community. It is thus that 'the Spirit and Form of Indian Polity' worked themselves out. It is thus that the religion of humanity will become objectively real in a free world union.[2] Why then are cosmopolitan idea and world state appearing first and the spiritual urge of unity still waiting for appearance ? Apparently, there is no rule of priority between spirit and form and any of the two may precede the other. In some countries like Germany, as shown by Sri Aurobindo himself, the nation idea came first and then assumed the body of the state; while in others like the United Kingdom the state came first to mould the divergent units (Scotch, Welsh, Northern Irish) into a nation.

The rational age passes through three political phases, viz., democratic, socialist and anarchist. Socialist concentration of power leads to the natural reaction of anarchist dissolution of power. Where then rests the present struggle between capitalist democracy and socialist totalitarianism which Sri Aurobindo saw around the mid-century ? He does not visualise an overwhelming victory of communism but rather expects that the two will

[1] *The Human Cycle*, P. 332

[2] *The Ideal of Human Unity*, P. 366ff.

seek some sort of accommodation in an international body which might be the successor of the UNO. If that be so the anarchist order does not follow the totalitarian socialist order. But perhaps the adjustment between democracy and socialism will be temporary and Sri Aurobindo has shown the inherent contradiction between the two. Moreover, the international body may culminate in a centralised world state and produce the anarchist reaction. Anyway, the spiritual society will do away with the intellectual machinery of the state and thus, by necessity, will be anarchist.

On the analogy of the previous ascensions from matter to life and from life to mind, the ascension from mind to spirit should be a revolutionary act involving organic change. The leap of Spirit from life to mind brought about a change of species from the ape to the man. The elevation from mind to spirit should introduce another mutation of the species. The superman, a divine being, must be a species superior to the human being of the vital-rational plane. Sri Aurobindo does not reject this possibility.[1] But he is not despondent about man, the whole race, rising to supermanhood, of course in a long, slow and gradual march, layer by layer. One need not be too critical of this hope because nature does not always follow its own precedents and may make a new experiment in evolution.

Although Sri Aurobindo arrives at the spiritual culmination through the historical-rational method its social content is not very different from the utopian conception of *satyayuga* or of the Marxian millennium of classless society. It is only more elaborate and more rationally connected with the past. The question still remains—how will society progress without struggle and adventure which have been the *élan* of all history ? Can the interplay of freedom and diversity, even spiritual, dispense with conflict which is the law of nature ? It is not possible to find a convincing reply. Because in the rational age the idea of progress is bound

[1] *The Human Cycle*, P. 274

to be wedded to the discords, the struggles through which it has to forge its path. It is not possible for the rational mind to comprehend an entirely new conception of progress which arises from the concord of the Spirit.

But when shall it be ? Is it coming in any foreseeable future ? Is it not, like a mirage, an elusive destination, ever-receding, since the dreamers of *satyayuga* and kingdom of God dreamed and desired ? How long is the weary march to continue ?

There is no answer. It can only be said that there is no end to the journey. The travail of the Spirit will never cease. The *satyayuga* is an imaginary finality of perfection. The Spirit has no finality. From unknown depths it has arisen. To unknown height it will go. The ascent will be quickened as men of the Spirit appear,—moving stars shining in their life and illuminating the path.

ATINDRANATH BOSE

REVIEW

Ramayana *By Shudha Mazumdar.* Pub. Orient Longmans, Madras 2. Pp. xx + 540, Price Rs. 10/-

The Ramayana of Valmiki deservedly known as the Adi Kavya, Premier Poem, has inspired a galaxy of poets and writers in Sanskrit to pour their genius into the mould of its story. To mention only a few, Kalidasa's Raghuvamsa, Bhavabhuti's Uttara-ramacharita, the Janakiharana of Kumaradasa bear the stamp of Valmiki in an unmistakable manner. With the decline of classical Sanskrit and the growing influence of the vernaculars this Epic which has struck roots in the hearts of the people as no other has ever done, began to be rendered in the languages of the different regions of the country. In fact this movement started as early as the fifth century B.C. when it was translated into Pali and Prakrit. Naturally each version got coloured with the local custom and usage and a number of variations crept in, not all of them adding to the merit of the original. The main story remained the same, but the treatment, the descriptions and the details in characterisation differed.

One of the more important of these adaptations is the Krittivasa Ramayana in the Bengali tongue; it wields as much influence in Bengal as the Ramacharita Manasa in the Hindi regions and the Kamba Ramayana among the Tamils. Krittivasa Ojha hailed from Phulia in the Nadia district in the 15th century and wrote what is unanimously regarded as the most successful version of the Ramayana in Bengali. He was followed by other writers viz., Kavichandra, Adbhutacharya etc. but their efforts were not as successful.

The book before us is a narration in English, by Shudha Majumdar, of this Ramayana of Krittivasa. It is not a literal

translation nor a complete rendering. She tells the story in her own words, deleting repetitions and portions not germane to the development of the plot. The entire work is elegant and entertaining.

Krittivasa Ramayana has Seven books as against the Six of Valmiki. The story goes beyond the *Pattābhiṣekham* finale to the end of the Uttara Kanda. There are a number of departures from the narrative of Valmiki which, we are afraid, dilute the heroic strain of the original. Taranisen advancing to the battle with the name RAMA written all over his chariot, Ravana supplicating before Rama with folded arms, Rama overcome by compassion and deciding not to exterminate the adversary, Rama helplessly weeping before Durga at the climax on the battle-field, testify more to the Vaishnava milieu of the poet rather than to the valour of the mighty archetypes.

However, that is only by the way. This is the first time that Krittivasa has been made available in English and we cannot be too thankful to Srimati Majumdar for the pains she has taken in providing this enjoyable reading. We have no doubt it will be popular with the English-reading public for whom it is meant.

The get-up is beautiful.

M. P. PANDIT